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Approved For Release 2001/07/26 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000600250057-0

RUSSIA:

The [illegible] the Kremlin

My [illegible] Penkovsk[illegible] 19[illegible] in the Caucasus, [illegible] city of Ordzhonikidze (former[illegible]kavkaz), in the family of a salaried employee. [I am] Russian by nationality, [illegible]ssion an officer of military intelligence with the rank of colonel . . . I [illegible] the people of the West [illegible] saying here . . . I ask that [illegible]lieve in my sincerity, in my [illegible] to the real struggle for peace.

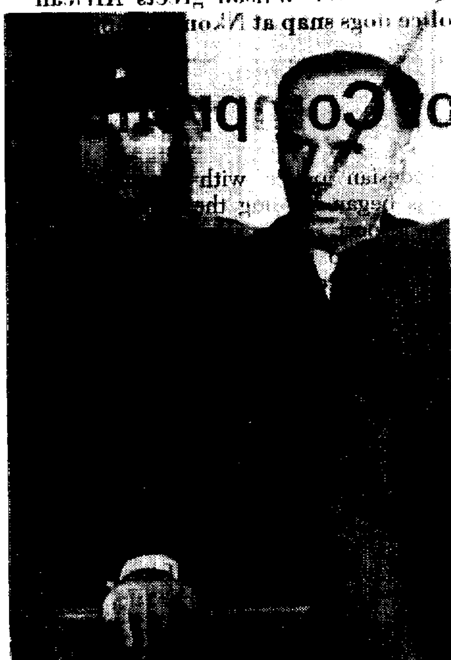
These are the opening words of what is certainly one of the most extraordinary documents in the history of espionage: the notes and private reflections of superspy Oleg Penkovsky. Allegedly smuggled out to the West and turned over to Soviet defector Peter Deriabin (who has translated them), Penkovsky's journals have now been edited by former NEWSWEEK Senior Editor Frank Gibney and will be published later this month under the title "The Penkovskiy Papers" *(411 pages. Doubleday. $5.95).*

How authentic, in fact, are the Penkovsky Papers? British businessman Greville Wynne, who was Penkovsky's chief contact with U.S. and British intelligence and who was a co-defendant in the 1963 Moscow trial at which Penkovsky was sentenced to death, denies that he himself had anything to do with getting the papers out of Russia. But Wynne and others also insist that the papers are the true testament of Oleg Penkovsky, a successful Soviet man driven to lonely revolt against the Soviet system.

At the time of Penkovsky's trial, the Soviet prosecutor made every effort to portray him not only as a debauched philanderer but also as a minor functionary without access to information of any importance. But as the papers now make abundantly plain, Penkovsky's connections extended into the highest reaches of the Soviet military. From the spring of 1961, when he first approached Wynne, to the fall of 1962 when he was arrested, Penkovsky passed along to Britain and the U.S. some 5,000 separate items of top-secret military, political and economic intelligence.

Wrong Tip: Some of the information may have been of questionable value. According to Penkovsky, the "fantastic" secret weapon of which Nikita Khrushchev [illegible] boasted [illegible] missile powered by nuclear energy. Khrushchev, he writes, pushed his gen[illegible] the weapon prematurely [illegible] it exploded on the launch[illegible]ad, killing 300 people including [illegible] missile chief Marshal Mitrofan Nedelin. Most U.S. scientists, however, believe that the Soviet Union could not have had such an advanced nuclear-propelled missile program as early as 1960.

But in the main, Penkovsky's reports must have delighted the intelligence agencies in London and in Washington. The great-nephew of one [illegible] general and the so[illegible] of ano[illegible] was on [illegible] of terms with Gen. [illegible] the top boss of Soviet military intelligence [illegible] Soviet espionage overseas, but he named names. (After his arrest, the Soviets quickly carried out a wholesale recall of intelligence officers stationed abroad.) And Penkovsky also had a pipeline right into the Supreme Military Council through his old friend Marshal Sergei Varentsov, then chief of Russia's tactical missile forces.



Penkovsky on trial: 20,000 roses

Sovfoto

Oleg Penkovsky, in short, was very much a part of the Soviet establishment and parts of his papers read like a Moscow Confidential. "Drunkenness and sexual relations with office secretaries and other women are a usual thing among the Central Committee employees as well as in all Soviet ministries and departments," he wrote. "Khrushchev and [Minister of Culture Ekaterina] Furtseva have set the example." Penkovsky then goes on to document in acid detail the [illegible] ample: "Brig. Gen. Andrei Romanovich Pozovny: When his son was entering the Artillery Academy I got the examination questions for him in advance."

Penkovsky himself was clearly no paragon of Communist morality but he was genuinely distressed at the selfishness and corruption of Soviet leaders. After a party for Marshal Varentsov, at which the top brass, including Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky and high party official Viktor Churayev, guzzled quantities of champagne, cognac and vodka, Pe[illegible] wrote angrily: "Churayev approached me several times during the party asking me to buy him some Chanel No. 5, Arpège and other perfumes for his wife if I went on another [illegible] trip abroad . . . Later [he] be[illegible] brag about having 20,000 [illegible] other [illegible] at his cou[illegible]se, [then] went on to tell us about a . . . hunger riot that had taken place at Ivanovo where approximately 400 people attacked the militia . . . I thought to myself: 'What a louse, he has 20,000 roses while ordinary people are starving'."

[illegible], Penkovsky also became obsessed with the conviction that Khrushchev ("the bald devil") in some way would lead the world into a nuclear war as soon as he felt strong enough to win. And so when he turned spy for the West, Penkovsky apparently was convinced that he was acting for the good of the Russian people. He was not a mercenary and he was, quite evidently, a brave man. In September 1961, when he was sent to Paris on an official mission, he decided to return to Moscow to continue his espionage despite the fact that his Western contacts feared for his safety.

Self-betrayal: Penkovsky knew full well that eventually the Soviet security apparatus would find him out. But if the story that has been accepted in intelligence circles over the past few years is correct, he may at least have had the satisfaction of knowing that it was his greatest contribution to the West that led to his final downfall. Three days before John F. Kennedy delivered his dramatic ultimatum to Khrushchev at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, the story goes, the late President asked his advisers how he could be sure he was not touching off a nuclear war. He was told that the only way to find out was to check with "our most secret source in Moscow." "Do it," said the President and 32 hours later the answer came back: "Soviet nuclear forces not in state of war readiness."

The "secret source," of course, was Penkovsky, and the message he sent probably cost him his life. Since there had been no time to follow the usual security procedures, he had irretrievably betrayed himself to the secret police. [illegible] arrested immediately, and in May 1963, Oleg Penkovsky was cut down by a Soviet firing squad.